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Pauperism and Charities

The State and the Poor. By GEOFFREY DRAGE. The Nation's Library, No. 9. (London: Collins Clear-Type Press. 1914. Pp. 264. 1s.)

Some of the factors in the most pressing English poor law problems are indicated in this book. Seriatim the author discusses vagrancy, the mentally defective, the aged poor, the adult poor, women, children, and areas and administration, citing statistics where possible, giving a brief history of past treatment, and concluding with a statement of the present status of the problem.

"The habitual vagrant after a certain number of convictions should be sentenced to a period of detention in a labor colony." The recent Mental Deficiency act has brought about a much needed reform in that it provides for the handling of all feeble-minded by one authority. In the problem of the care of the aged poor the fault to be remedied is the manner of giving outdoor relief. There is no uniformity in the methods pursued by different guardians, and in the vast majority of cases the relief is quite insufficient. The author views the question of the able-bodied male pauper as perhaps the most hopeless of the whole poor law problem. While admitting that labor exchanges have done good work, he believes that the great thing to be done is "to legislate for the children." Much might be effected, he believes, by preventing blind alley occupations and by preventing boys from being employed at any work involving long hours of deteriorating routine. In the discussion of the widow with young children, he reaches the conclusion that "the best plan would be to board out the children with their mother, paying a sum large enough for the maintenance of the children, to relieve the mother from the necessity of working."

For poor law children, the author pronounces boarding out as perhaps ideally the best method, but points out that it depends "on the supply of suitable homes available, requires very careful inspecting, and can only be used for children adopted by the guardians." Where boarding out is not used he would encourage investigation of home conditions before granting relief and, as far as consistent with safety, the granting of outdoor relief provided home conditions are satisfactory. In discussing areas of administration, the author rejects the proposals of both the majority and minority reports of the Royal Commission on

the Poor Law, and endorses the scheme put forward by Mr. Charles Booth and Sir Arthur Downes, which rests upon the grouping of unions based on population rather than on the area occupied and varying in method according to urban or rural conditions.

In regard to poor law authority for London, Mr. Drage believes that the unit of area should be coterminous with Greater London, as such an area constitutes an urban population socially interconnected and industrially interdependent. As to the question of the constitution of the central authority for London, he rejects the scheme put forward by the majority of the poor law commission and favors "a transformed Metropolitan Asylums Board." His choice of this body rests on the belief that its nearly fifty years of practicable experience and evolution as a working machine of public assistance make it the logical body to assume the new responsibility.

The book should be of interest to all students of English social conditions. The author's twenty-five years of practical experience, both in the United Kingdom and in other countries, give his conclusions no little value. It will hardly prove of interest to the general American reader. In this connection, however, it should be stated that the author's task was no easy one. The present system of English local self-government truly presents a labyrinth "full of pitfalls to the unwary," especially in the domain of public assistance. The poor law administrator in England is supposed to be acquainted with 350 or 400 statutes, with 5000 judicial decisions interpreting those statutes, and with poor law and local government board orders which if printed with the statutes would cover more than 2500 octavo pages.

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Socialism and Co-operative Enterprises

Historical Materialism and the Economics of Karl Marx. By BENEDETTO CROCE. Translated by C. M. MEREDITH. With an introduction by A. D. LINDSAY. (New York: The Macmillan Company. 1914. Pp. xxiii, 188. \$1.25.)

This is a collection of occasional essays and reviews, written by Senatore Croce from 1896 to 1900. They are still worth reading as an interesting commentary and criticism of the theories of Marx by one who, although himself both Hegelian